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ABSTRACT

This report describes User Education Resources (USER), an Australian database containing both print and audiovisual materials related to library instruction. Intended to make a wide range of ideas readily available to librarians interested in educating library patrons, USER collects catalog guides, classification guides, evaluation forms, floor plans, government publication guides, general library guides, tape-slide programs, videotapes, and tests. The report details the history of USER, its system configuration, indexing language, file organization, reference structure, and materials bank. (FM)

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USER EDUCATION RESOURCES : USER

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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USER EDUCATION RESOURCES : USER

This paper is about USER, an acronym for USer Education Resources, which is a data base held at the Caulfield Institute of Technology. It is comprised of a wide range of resources (both print and non-print).

The story of its development begins in 1976 at a meeting of the Association of Librarians of Colleges of Advanced Education (a national body of chief librarians at colleges of advanced education). At its annual meeting, I proposed that someone ought to be looking into the collection of resources which are relevant to reader education in order to assist user education librarians to be more effective in assisting students understand the complexities of libraries, through the improvement of their own materials and for the fostering of ideas. The idea, as it was conceived, was restricted to those resources used by higher education libraries. However, as time went by, it became obvious that the data base should be a collection of materials relating to user education in the widest possible sense, i.e. it should include materials developed by public libraries, school libraries, special libraries, and academic libraries for their users in order to not only have the widest possible appeal, but to provide a wealth of ideas.

The data base collects materials that are both print and audio visual. It includes such items as catalogue guides, classification guides, evaluation forms, floor plans, government publication guides, general library guides, tape-slide prodictopms. films (converted to videotape), videos, tests, etc., etc.

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With the inclusion of resources from all library areas, the data base has become a mine of information for librarians serving in any of the data base areas of librarianship. It puts together the ideas of many people who have spent considerable time in researching and developing their programmes. Its proper use, I believe, will lead to an increased professionalism in the marketing of our libraries. This will be assisted by the 2 main reasons for the data base which are to make available the widest possible range of ideas including their methods of presentation and the saving of time by assisting them with these ideas in the development of programmes specifically suited for their own individual needs. Too many are forced to reinvent the wheel simply because of a lack of knowledge of what is available.

In 1976, when I began my research into what to collect, how to collect, organise and disseminate these user resources, I was working without knowledge of the existence of the clearinghouse in the United States called LOEX (Library Orientation EXchange), which had been operating since 1972 and is located at Eastern Michigan University, Center of Educational Resources and has operated as a deposit and loan scheme for user education materials. (Over the years, it has built up a collection exceeding 10,000 items). So, much of the work done was done in isolation. As my research (which was operating at no more than a snail's pace) was nearing an end, 2 factors assisted in its completion. The first was an overseas study tour in 1978 which included talks with LOEX representative, as well as the newly formed group LIMB (Library Instruction Materials Bank) in the United Kingdom. In my talks with Ian Malley, the Information Officer for User Education for the British Library Council, and also in charge of LIMB, both in the United Kingdom and when he came to Australia for the 1979 Library Association's Biennial Conference, the planning

of the data base came another step closer to finality. The second important event affecting progress towards finality of the data base was the coming of a new Director to the Caulfield Institute of Technology, Mr. Ron Cumming. The new Director, coming from a university and research based background, decided that the Caulfield Institute of Technology needed a boost of funds in its research and projects beneficial to the community, and it was through him that I received $11,000 to employ a Special Projects Librarian to design and implement a system that would organise user education resources and allow libraries everywhere to access.
Ms. Johanna Cook was appointed in mid-May 1979 and has worked on this project, in a part-time capacity for the remainder of that year. The planning for USER is now complete. Nine centres have been established in the capital city and territory of each state in Australia and one in New Zealand.

The overall operation of this plan goes something like this - a subscription membership is required from all libraries both those that send material to the data base as well as those who only wish to access the data. These subscription funds will allow for the continual development of the system and pay for fixed costs such as coding, input, production of fiche and mailing. The system will operate with Caulfield Institute of Technology as the central organiser and processor. It must receive 9 copies of print materials for coding and dissemination to the other 8 data bases. It will convert tape-slide productions (one copy for 2 weeks only is required) on to a standard video U-matic or National ½" for further distribution to data bases after coding. It will, twice yearly, produce updates through ACI. Micromation produces a fiche of the contents of the data base. It is proposed, though it is up to each collection centre, that materials not be lent as this would weaken the strength of the data base and make trips by

librarians, many of them covering long distances to the site of the data base, somewhat a useless exercise. Photocopies, of course, may be provided at the data base's discretion, although the copyright restrictions, if any, should be abided by. It is my suggestion to controllers of data bases that they do not lend and that enquirers be satisfied with a photocopy or be encouraged to approach the originating source for a copy of the material in which they show interest. This is especially so with A.V. productions.

The present data base which was compiled using only the resources from a selected number of libraries, currently holds about 900 items and so far there have been few problems in getting producers to deposit their work in the data base. No doubt, there could be the occasional reluctance by the producer of a work if they felt that others might blatantly take their ideas and considerable energies and use them without giving the recognised credits and acknowledgements. Some may be reluctant to donate their work because it does include ideas and concetps developed by others, but not acknowledged in the second work. I think a third reason for reluctance by some is that material developed for a teaching programme may be used or criticised out of context for they do not have lecture or explanatory notes appended to them. I believe these problems can be overcome as we mature in out habits, perhaps become a little less selfish and recognise somebody else's talents by giving credit where credit is due.

It is planned that USER will be supplemented with a bi-monthly journal READER which will include snippets of information on material recently received as well as being a newsheet of developments occurring throughout libraries in Australia and New Zealand that are of interest to user education libraries. Its survival is dependent upon you and your colleagues contributing news items, for it is effective communication which improves our professional standards. It is not intended that it become a literary journal.

Finally, some international co-operation has been achieved through liaison with LOEX and LIMB. The Caulfield Institute of Technology, as the central processor in the system, wil select a number of items which it believes are of international standard and that may present a new idea or development of an existing one which could be taken up by others in other countries. Likewise, it will receive similar materials from LOEX and LIMB which, though centrally held at the Caulfield Institute of Technology, will be announced and described through READER. All that USER needs now is your support for without it the energies and costs associated with its development will be wasted and would, no doubt, be a sure sign to others hoping to enter into the field promoting librarianship, that general support is not available. The data base is about promoting new ideas, saving both money and effort. Let's not have this effort wasted.

Now for some of the technical details on the creation and organisation of the USER data base.

System configuration

Initially, it was thought that as the Caulfield Institute of Technology was the central organiser of USER, that the data base would be wholly produced and maintained at CIT using existing computer facilities and expertise.

However, a cost-benefit analysis showed that it would be far better to purchase some of the expertise needed from outside. As such, it was decided to utilise the INDICAT computer package, available from ACI.

The reasons for this choice were as follows:

1. It was more cost-effective to purchase an already existing software package, rather than to create new programmes at CIT to manipulate the data.
2. INDICAT was already being used for similar library applications and therefore had proved itself in a real life situation

3. The output so generated can be processed by the MICROMATICS com bureau to produce a fiche.

4. A conversion programme is available from ACI which means that the information contained in the USER data base can be readily made available on-line through Ausinet if this seems desirable at a future stage.

Data production itself remains at CIT. The material is indexed directly on to worksheets and then, via a terminal, stored in the college's computer. Each time an update of the INDEX is required, a magnetic tape is generated which is then sent to ACI for the production of the author and subject listings from which the fiche is to be produced.

Choice of INDEX Language

It was thought that some vocabulary control was necessary if consistency, both in the terms assigned to documents, as well as in the depth of indexing, was to be maintained.

Using similar listings to those designed by LOEX and LIMB, a number of categories were established which would be used to designate both publication medium and type.

The choice of the actual subject description and identifiers posed somewhat more of a problem. After checking a sample of the materials received, against various thesauri and lists of subject terms, it was decided to use the ERIC thesaurus of descriptors as a first source of subject terms for the USER INDEX. ERIC, although it covers a wide range of educational and related topics, as well as a good range of subject disciplines, is not entirely suitable as a thesaurus for user education resources. In addition to including many terms which are not applicable to user education,

it also lacks a sizeable number of subject terms from the scientific and technical disciplines, as such ERIC terms needed to be supplemented by a list of subject headings covering these areas.

ORGANISATION OF FILES

As has been stated above, the index will consist of 2 listings, i.e. an author and a subject file.

The author file includes, in accition to the names of both personal and corporate authors, the author's affiliation where appropriate.

The subject file includes 3 types of headings, all interfiled with each other. They are:

1. Publication medium, e.g. films, tape-slide programmes.
2. Publication type, e.g. library guides, indexes and abstracts guides.
3. Descriptors/identifiers.

A listing of the terms used in the index is reproduced under these headings following the subject file.

It is thought that this listing might facilitate retrieval of relevant material from USER. It means that no time need to be wasted looking for headings that do not exist, while at the same time a perusal of the list might suggest alternative approaches to the problem in hand.

The information recorded for each entry appears in full at every occurrence of a document in the listings. In addition to author and subject, it includes such items as date, country of origin, collation, series, etc.

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For ease of handling, the whole of an entry is represented at every access point so that an assessment of its suitability can be made without having to refer to a so called 'main entry'.

When, and if, the data base becomes avialable on-line, all the information in a record can be used either singly or in combination to make retrieval of material more effective.

Reference structure

References in the actual listings have been kept to a minimum. The only references included are cross-references which refer from a term used in ERIC to the preferred Australian terms used in USER.

No reference structure was devised for the terms not listed in ERIC as this would have been too time consuming and costly. Furthermore, the nature of the material included in USER at present is so broad with regard to actual subject disciplines covered that such linkages seemed somewhat superfluous.

On the other hand, ERIC does cover the essential linkages between aspects of educational technology and methodology which are applicable to user education material as well.

This reference structure will assume importance when USER will start to include materials other than those actually used in user education itself, such as research reports, case studies, discussions on methods and principles, and so on.

MATERIALS BANK

As the index is complemented by a materials bank, which stores the actual physical items, and as librarians are invited to come and peruse this material, some

system needed to be devised which not only would facilitate access once an item was identified through the index, but one which also would provide a helpful order for browsing.

Often, the ideas conveyed by one document can serve as a basis for producing similar material in related areas.

The printed material, therefore, has been divided into a number of broad categories, categories such as subject guides, floor-plans, research guides, library guides, etc.

Within these categories the items are ordered by year of inclusion and then by accession number.

The ordering of the material is slightly different for A.V. materials. As CIT will transfer all audio-visual type materials on to video-cassettes, and because the cost involved in both the transfer of materials and the actual tapes is rather great, all materials have been banked up sequentially as they are received. As such, it will only be the index which will provide specific access by author, and subject for these items.